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WING DCO (DEPUTY COMMANDER FOR OPERATIONS) LEADERSHIP:
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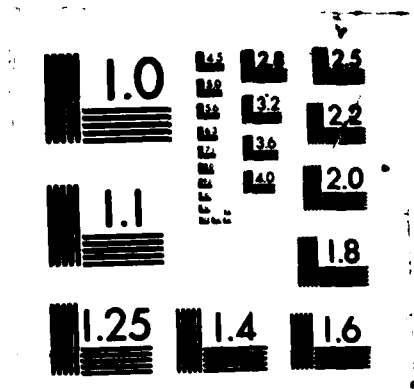
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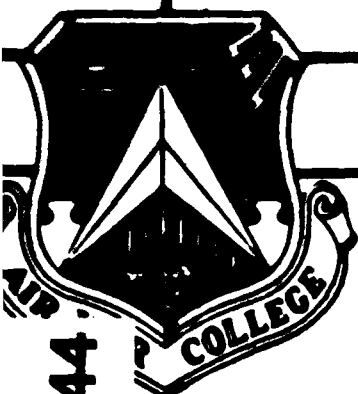
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RESEARCH REPORT

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WING DCO LEADERSHIP: AS IT AFFECTS MIDDLE MANAGERS (MAJORS)

By COLONEL DONALD R. SCHREIBER

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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WING DCO LEADERSHIP: AS IT AFFECTS MIDDLE MANAGERS (MAJORS)

by

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Colonel, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel Hans J. Asmus

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Wing DCO Leadership: As it Effects Middle Managers
(Majors)

AUTHOR: Donald R. Schreiber, Colonel, USAF

➤ This report includes information from surveys and interviews which document concerns aircrews have with ascending to the Deputy Commander for Operations (DCO) position. The DCO position is described per Air Force and Strategic Air Command (SAC) regulations. Views of the DCO position and how it effects majors is presented from the DCO and majors' perspectives. Failure to involve majors in responsible tasks is seen as the problem to overcome. DCOs must delegate some of their tasks so they have time to be leaders. Examples of how the DCO can motivate qualified majors to aspire to senior leadership positions are provided. Solutions strengthen the entire DCO complex. While the report focuses on the DCO complex, it has applicability to any wing deputate and its middle managers.

△

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Donald R. Schreiber has a long and varied career in operational flying units. Of his 4000 hours flying time, nearly 900 hours was in combat in three different aircraft, the RF-4C (112 mission tour North Vietnam), the KC-135 and the U-2R. He was awarded the Silver Star, four Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 17 Air Medals. He was a U-2R detachment commander or U-2/TR-1/SR-71 squadron commander during four of the last five years prior to assignment to Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He has a bachelors degree in Marketing and Accounting from Washington State University and a masters degree in Guidance and Counseling from Troy State University. He graduated from Squadron Officers School, class 69-C; Air Command and Staff College, class of 1971; and National Security Management Course, 1978. Colonel Schreiber is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1986.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Deputy Commander of Operations (DCO) and middle managers (majors) is of great importance to career retention and career ambitions of the young officer. Normally, there are at least one or two layers of command or management between the DCO and major, but the leadership or lack thereof sends valuable signals to the major that will have marked impact on career goals.

Have you ever heard a young officer express his desire to be a DCO, to continue flying and provide the key leadership to wing flight operations? It sounds like one of the best jobs in the Air Force, yet many of our top officers in the middle ranks lose interest in pursuing that goal. These persons end up with early separations or, worse yet for the Air Force, they lower their career goals for rank and position and remain on active duty until retirement.

Why do some officers lose interest in pursuing their potential? THEY DO NOT WANT THE DCO POSITION and alternative jobs do not interest them. Air Force surveys document dissatisfiers for young officers and these factors will be used to prove that good leadership and role models are needed throughout the chain-of-command.

It is obvious that a middle management officer normally would not work directly for the DCO. He or she would answer to a squadron commander or branch chief, but my contention is that

DCOs influence career goals because they are junior colonels. DCOs hold the position for which the young officer would be competing if he/she were promoted to colonel, and the key point in an officer's career for commitment to senior rank is at the latest, junior major. At that time, the young officer must decide if he/she will remain in the cockpit versus applying for staff positions at headquarters, and what military and civilian education is required to make him/her competitive for promotion. I am not saying headquarters staff experience or advanced education is absolutely required for promotion to colonel, but promotion statistics indicate a higher percentage of officers with those attributes are promoted. While the young officer is weighing the requirements, he/she is also looking at the DCO position and saying--"Is it worth it?"

The scope of this research was limited to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and the DCO position for a couple of reasons. First, SAC has been my major command for most of my career and second, SAC has written guidance on the DCO position that is lacking in other commands. The middle manager on which I focused was rated, since operational flying wings are required to have rated DCOs. The terms middle manager and senior crewmember will be used interchangeably for the purposes of this paper. Even with the given parameters of the research, the concepts have applicability to any command DCO position and many other Air Force wing level deputates. Our young officers want a good example to follow and want to feel good about the future position

they aspire to fill.

I intend to document the problem with DCO leadership and management of his duties that "turn off" the middle manager. The problem will be analyzed from the DCO and middle manager perspective. Finally, solutions to the problem will be given.

The ultimate purpose of this paper is to provide the DCO insights on how to motivate young crewmembers to aspire to their position through leadership. A big part of the DCOs job is to learn to manage so he has time to lead. If the DCO has the time to lead, the entire wing will thrive, mission accomplishment will improve and people of the wing will be motivated for careers that match their potential.

CHAPTER II

DCO: LEADERSHIP

The common perception of leadership responsibilities for the DCO vary from the person who flies all the time to the person overburdened by paperwork. DCOs who are described by either one of these extremes do little for the Air Force or the people they lead. To define the problem with DCO leadership of the junior officer, we first look at Air Force and SAC regulations outlining position responsibilities. The Air Force regulation will be reviewed, followed by a look at the SAC view of DCO leadership and management.

Officer Air Force Specialties are outlined in Air Force Regulation (AFR) 36-1. Change 2 of that regulation, effective 31 October 1984, summarizes the Director of Operations (DCO) position as follows. Directs and monitors operations programs of flying organizations (group level and above), including flight operations, unit training, intelligence, communications, armament, and tactical planning. Serves as a chief advisor to commanders. (16-attachment 5) As it should be, guidance from the Air Force level is very general in nature. The problem we will document centers around the fact that DCOs have a tendency to get wrapped-up in managing these areas that are under direct supervision of squadron commanders and branch chiefs. The result is an operational unit that cannot work at peak efficiency because people aren't properly involved.

As outlined in AFR 26-2, which shows the organization of wings at base level, deputy commanders supervise all divisions, squadrons, squadron sections and detachments in their functional area of responsibility. (12-19) Since the DCO writes effectiveness or performance reports on all people under his direct supervision and is in the chain for all reports that are elevated for higher endorsement, he/she must know the people under his supervision. So far, we have one regulation (AFR 36-1) that deals primarily with management of things and the other regulation (AFR 26-2) that deals with organization and chain-of-command lines, which leans towards leadership responsibilities. SAC has two regulations that provide more specific guidance as to the functions and responsibilities of the DCO. Both Strategic Air Command Regulations (SACR) 55-57 and 55-63 list areas of responsibility to MANAGE, but nothing is mentioned about leadership responsibility of people. SACR 55-63 says the DCO, through the squadron commanders, supervises activities of the combat crews. (18-12) (4-1) Maybe it is supposed to be intuitive that a DCO is supposed to be a leader role model for the young major, but if it is, it is my contention that DCOs are failing.

Career Issues talking papers developed at the Headquarters, Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center (AFMPC) at Randolph Air Force Base (AFB), Texas, highlight our concern. A November 1985 paper, developed by the Personnel Survey Branch, showed poor supervision above the unit commander level as one of

four career dissatisfiers for officers in polls taken in the 1982-1984 time frame.(1-2) Perceptions of the majors will be discussed in the next chapter, however, DCOs concerned with trying to do everything themselves, becoming too involved in management of things, neglecting leadership responsibilities and becoming somewhat powerless are trends with which majors are concerned.

Noncareer-oriented members identified pay, quality of leadership/supervision and impact of Air Force lifestyle on the family life (in that order) as factors that contributed to their decision to separate from the Air Force.(1-3) The DCO cannot do much about pay and very little on the impact the Air Force mission has on family life; however, he can do a tremendous amount about the quality of leadership/supervision. In fact, there are ways to provide quality free time to Air Force families through superb leadership of people and management of functions.

To suggest that Air Force or SAC regulations outline leadership guidelines for DCOs would be wasteful and improper, but, overlooking the subject in general terms is also improper. In briefings to key personnel at Headquarters SAC workshops, recently retired Commander-In-Chief (CINC) SAC, General Bennie L. Davis stressed the importance of taking care of people. People were his first priority but, you cannot take care of people without superb leadership. The poll that AFMPC ran documents a breakdown in leadership that has not been dealt with. Perhaps some DCOs are paying lip service to people programs and

leadership when that was not their intention when they took the job. Perhaps they are bogged down with crisis management of "things", at least that is the perception of the majors with whom I have discussed the problem. Mr. Rene McPherson, Dana Corporation, says "Almost every executive agrees that people are the most important asset. Yet almost none really lives it." (19-249) The perceived problem of leadership or role model the DCO provides to the middle manager is there and has been long neglected. A well known retired major command CINC told me he was not concerned with motivating junior majors, that the dream would come to the top. I cannot agree with that statement. In my personal experience, I have seen superior officers leave the Air Force because they did not see a position after squadron commander that they wanted to fill. The position they were turning down was the DCO position, the very position to which most crewmembers should aspire.

CHAPTER III

THE MAJOR'S POINT OF VIEW.

Put yourself in the position of the brand new major. You have approximately 12 years in the Air Force and start to look at what needs to be done to make lieutenant colonel and perhaps colonel. There are many variables to review to see if the effort is worth the goal. The expectancy theory developed by Douglas T. Hall gives us a model to review the variables. (7-34) The theory quantifies choices and introduces perceived probability of a given outcome. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to say that individuals make career choices based on expectations. Without getting into family considerations like spouse employment, etc, the major issues that confront the major deal with effort expended versus promotion potential and job satisfaction. The choices are to "go for it", shoot for a squadron commander position or stay on a crew or staff position and retire at 20 years as a major or, with luck lieutenant colonel. There is a third option, separation prior to retirement. Since few officers separate after making major, that choice will not be discussed. The outcomes that must be weighed deal with effort expended versus the probability of realizing goals.

Choice A would be to remain on a flying crew, take the path of little responsibility, little self-improvement required. Choice B would mean taking on additional duties, taking the risk of a new position and challenge, completing self-improvement

courses such as Air War College by seminar and accepting challenges that may require long working hours. If choice B is selected, there is always the chance of not reaching the goal of squadron commander or if you make it, the next coveted position, the DCO, may not be desirable. With that dilemma, the young major may take the easy way out--choice A. Young officers would go for the promotions if they liked the reward (DCO position), but why take a shot at a job that is viewed as unrewarding?

As young captains, all crewmembers want to do a little. They do not think of DCO duties, so say the Squadron Officers' School seminars that were polled in the fall and winter 1985 classes. (21) Discussions with Air Command and Staff students and majors from operational squadrons at a SAC base revealed the dilemma; do I want a job at the top? A 1979 survey of nearly 2000 top executives in the Fortune 500 companies revealed that two-thirds (2/3) of the respondents did not aspire to the CEO post. (10-205) Whether it be in the civilian or military arena, the problem may be the same. Job satisfaction was ranked first in a Squadron Officers' School poll (20-2) and ranked 2nd or 3rd during the years 1981 through 1984 by an Air Force poll picking career satisfiers. (1-2) Job satisfaction has to be considered a prime reason for a career and "going for it".

Reference SACR 55-63, the DCO is the channel through which the commander commits his/her forces. (4-1) He/she is responsible for operational matters and there is not a SAC DCO who is not taking on that responsibility or he/she would not be

in the position long. The perception is that the DCO gets bogged down in paper work and micromanagement of programs that take all of his/her time. DCOs and other leaders often complain of not having time to lead because of paper work. When majors consistently see the DCO's desk covered with staff work, OERs, APRs and awards and decorations and working inordinately long hours to keep their head above water, they wonder if "going for it", is worth it. The DCO has to assure these jobs are done to properly reward his/her people, the concern is how are they done.

CHAPTER IV

THE DCO POINT OF VIEW

This is a difficult topic that needs to be addressed. The long list of responsibilities (14 functions) in SACR 55-63, keep him/her busy without mentioning the "people" aspects of the position. One DCO said sometimes he thought he was a personnel officer. With the myriad of responsibilities, he/she must learn to delegate responsibility and authority. The fact that executives fail in some cases is because they never learned to delegate. (13-1) In the Air Force, a failure to delegate properly leads to lesser degrees of success. Delegation and how it motivates the young officer will be discussed in Chapter V at great length. From the DCO point of view, it has become harder to delegate authority. There are factors that point toward increasing centralization in the Air Force. (12-5) Advanced communications systems and electronic data processing and the nature of weaponry and concepts of operations dictate greater centralized control, so says AFR 26-1. This centralization of control has taken power from the DCO position, which concerns young officers. They want to be led by people who have been positioned in traditional places of power, like the DCO position. The DCO has become more of a manager and less of a leader. Centralization has given more power to SAC and numbered Air Force staffs which automatically lessens the power of the DCO. Flying programs are often managed with inputs from the headquarters staff. The results of this are what one writer calls "fence

flaws--overmanaging; unable to delegate or build a team. (13-1) Whether the DCO is himself overmanaging or being overmanaged, the results are the same at the middle manager level. The DCO can only do so much himself, to the point that he/she gets behind and then it is too late to delegate. The people will not be trained to take the responsibility, much less be experienced in accepting responsibility. The "team" breaks down and both the DCO and major are disappointed, which drives to further centralization of control and apathy among the ranks.

For the DCO, the situation is tricky. He/she must know what power source or authority is available, and delegate within that authority. There must be some aggressiveness to take power from the SAC staff. Historically, the SAC staff will leave alone the DCO who manages programs of interest and gets the job done. Normally, the primary mission is accomplished. It is the flying time programs or filling personnel actions, as just a couple of examples, that get the DCO "behind the eight ball".

After a certain point in their careers, managers must cease to do the work themselves, and must become executives who see that it is done. (13-2) There is no way a DCO can personally work all 14 functions and responsibilities listed in SACR 55-59. (See attach 1) Ignoring one or two areas can cause an unsatisfactory rating during an Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). The DCO must delegate and accept the fact that certain amounts of control are lost. Delegation is not an effective way of exercising management by control. Participation becomes a

farce when it is applied as a sales gimmick or a device for kidding people into thinking they are important. (15-253) The facade will soon break down and productivity will subside. If the DCO assigns a major as his Supervisor of Flying (SOF), unless the person is incompetent, he/she should not be taken off the job during special missions or emergencies. Allowing a person to work under a special challenge will build their confidence and performance. On the other hand, if the DCO intervenes without cause, the word gets out fast to the troops and people will expect to be overmanaged. Overmanaged people are unmotivated people, people that will not bother to learn their specialty because they expect someone to intervene when challenges surface.

The DCO has to learn the delicate balance of power between the position and higher headquarters and the position and the crewmembers and where and when he/she needs to delegate.

CHAPTER V

THE FIX

Situations have been identified that influence majors to choose goals other than being a DCO or "going for it". To fix the problem, the image of the DCO position must be upgraded and the majors need to be empowered. It is as simple as that. Dr. Warren Bennis, professor of management at the School of Business at USC, calls empowerment one of the five traits of a superleader. (6-1) But, to give power, the DCO has to have power. Good managers are not motivated by a need for personal aggrandizement, or by a need to get along with subordinates, but rather by a need to influence others' behavior for the good of the whole organization. In other words, good managers want power. (14-100) The DCO has to have some power or clout so that the young major can proudly say, "I want that position because it is a good job". For some, the DCO position might be a final goal in the Air Force rather than a stepping stone to higher aspirations. The position should be good enough as a final goal and not just be a stepping stone.

To empower the major, he/she must be involved in more than just the basic mission of flying airplanes. Squadron commanders and DCOs often try the "soft" approach, not wanting to overburden the crews, in hopes that they will be positively motivated with time off or little responsibility. There are difficulties in the "soft" approach. It leads frequently to the abdication of management--to harmony, perhaps, but to no achievement.

performance. People take advantage of the soft approach. They continually expect more, but they give less and less. (15:247) As the majors give less and less, the squadron commanders and DCOs have to do more. The more bogged down the DCO becomes, the less productive the deputate becomes, and apathy toward the mission, the DCO position, and the Air Force sets in. It is a vicious circle.

The fix must come from the top and in this case the DCO position; however, all parties to the problem, the squadron commanders and majors must participate. As Thomas and Waterman put it in their book, *In Search of Excellence*, we are not talking about mollycoddling. We are talking about tough-minded respect for the individual and the willingness to train him, to set reasonable and clear expectations for him, and to grant him practical autonomy to step out and contribute directly to his job. (19:239) The DCO has to be willing to pass the challenges down to the majors, let them make mistakes, learn and become productive. To do this, The DCO has got to know his people.

To know your people, you have to know their goals and aspirations and match the responsibilities with stated goals. Lee Iacocca says he asked his people all down the line to question their people. "What are your objectives for the next ninety days? What are your plans, your priorities, your hopes? How do you intend to go about achieving them?" (8:47) Just by asking these questions, you motivate, you show an interest. Once the objectives or goals are established and a plan for achieving them

is discussed, follow-up. Without follow-up, all the time spent determining goals is wasted. You learn a lot about people by the goals they pick and how well they meet them. With follow-up, the DCO or squadron commander may see goal achievement rather than letting goals slip away. Once you know your people, you are ready to delegate.

General Bennie L. Davis, former CINCSAC, summed up the need for delegation of responsibilities and authorities.

Delegate--One of the primary benefits of fostering this sense of mission is that it gets people involved and gives them a sense of accomplishment.---it allows them to make decisions on the problems they're closest to and trains them for future leadership positions.---we can't expect people to learn to handle responsibility unless we give them the opportunity to experience it. (3-1)

Those thoughts on delegation are clear and concise. General Creech was quick to add "Link authority to responsibility". (2) The peculiar aspect of this concept is that everyone seems to agree with it, and perhaps vocally espouse the philosophy, but very few leaders really practice it. Bosses have a tendency to interfere too early. (8:50) If you interfere too early, you lose the whole effect and benefit of delegation. Nothing builds confidence like completing a project and seeing the outcomes of one's labor. Majors have told me they would like to be tasked and often wonder why they are not. We have a tremendous group of young officers with superb capabilities who have the time and ability to be more productive. Communication is the key to finding untapped capability.

The DCO must develop a strong sense of mission and values

so that employees know what the organization stands for and how he or she is expected to do things. (11-1) The people have to know the mission so they can get involved, which is the key to making delegation work. You will note that General Davis mentioned training the people. If you delegate to untrained people, they are apt to make mistakes and lose confidence. Therefore, it is important to get people involved by communicating in terms of mission and training. Communicate with a basic sense of excitement, fun and zest in all that you do. (19-237) Work is work, but do not make it harder or less enjoyable by displaying negative attitudes. Discuss the good aspects of the job and mission and highlight the successes. If there are less desirable aspects of the mission, discuss those also, but be positive about them. Be honest.

When information is passed out, be sure that everyone gets the word. Nothing is worse for morale than a lack of information down in the ranks. (19-268) The only way to assure equal opportunity is to assure that all people have the same information available. Good communication breeds involvement in the organization, and if the information is accurate, it brings power to the communicator. The majors also want feedback.

If senior management does not pass feedback on to the majors, they lose a great way to motivate all of the troops. Passing the information quickly seems to spur people on to greater effort. (19-268) Positive feedback motivates people to new heights and communication, properly done, is a necessary and

valuable leadership tool. It shows that senior leadership cares. Peer pressure motivates people to new productive levels. Crew awards are excellent feedback and they motivate non-recipients to greater performance. My last point in this chapter deals with organization or management.

The key to motivating young majors to want the DCO position is to manage effectively so you have time to lead. If the DCO is bogged down in management, he/she appears to be powerless. The fact that many DCOs appear powerless is the reason why majors do not aspire to the job. Given the structure he/she must work in, these are my recommendations for putting power back in the job.

The DCO has to concentrate on organizing each of the 14 responsibilities provided by SAC. Assume that a capable person is given responsibility and authority for each of the functions. Encourage pushing down the responsibility to the lowest possible level in each unit. Match the people with the tasks and move people that are underemployed. If they cannot be moved, get them an extra duty in a different work section. Push for teamwork. Vince Lombardi said his most important ingredient for success was to "have men play together as a team, not as a bunch of individuals." (8-56) The same principle is valid in the Air Force.

By getting people in the organization involved with all aspects of the Air Force, not just the fun portion of the mission, the total unit can feel a part of the successes that

will follow. There may be long hours during an actual crisis situation, but there will not be continual crisis management. Continual crisis management is despised by middle managers and in most cases, rightfully so. Get them involved before crisis management. Once the majors are involved, the DCO will still have his/her challenges.

With the management aspects of the position taken care of, it is time for leadership. It is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who decides which way to march and at what pace. (10:205) The DCO is the CEO in our case. As a leader, he/she needs to be in front where he/she is visible, not buried in paper work. People tend to prefer bosses with "clout." When employees perceive their boss as influential upward and outward, their status is enhanced by association and they generally have high morale and feel less critical or resistant to their boss. (9:65) The DCO's job is to fine tune the operation, to make sure the primary mission is paramount in everyone's mind. The exceptional DCO will assure the entire team works on the areas that are not noticeable until the Inspector General (IG) team arrives. In other words, get people involved in all areas of the total mission.

A key to pulling the entire DCO complex together is developing subordinate leaders. Lieutenant General Forreast, U.S. Army, called development of subordinate leaders the most important step toward achieving excellence. (5-30)

If the DCO allows his people to have responsibility and

he/she does his/her job, the wing will thrive and the DCO position will have the high status it deserves.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

DCOs cannot lose sight of the primary mission to direct flight operations; however, they have a responsibility to broaden their focus and motivate people to excel. There are some people that are motivated by DCOs and aspire to the position, but the 6 percent average retention rate for SAC pilots in the 30 to 35 year group, during the last five years indicates there is a problem. (17-8) As mentioned earlier, one of the prime causes for separation was dissatisfaction with senior leadership.

The middle managers are ready and eager to be freed. They want to be challenged and be prepared to take on increased responsibility. Improved communications and data automation have made it easier for higher headquarters to manage from a distance. The DCO needs to assign qualified people to each DCO function and give them the authority to run their program. Programs that are run well at base level tend to get less guidance from headquarters. Less input from headquarters allows the DCO to work vital personnel issues that are so important to his people.

By empowering people, the DCO ultimately becomes more powerful and the entire wing benefits. We can correct many of the dissatisfiers that drive young majors from the Air Force or at least make them less than totally productive. Most are personnel issues that need to be worked by senior leadership. The recommended solution solves two problems. One, it increases retention rates while making majors more productive and happy.

makes the DCO more productive.

To lay it out simply: first, the DCO must assure the primary flying mission is executed properly, second, delegate responsibility and authority to get people involved, and third take time to lead people through motivation. Work those personnel issues, new program initiatives, etc, that make your unit excel. The key is to delegate to motivate your troops and give yourself time to lead. General Larry D. Welch, current CINCSAC, summed it up when he called decentralizing authority and responsibility the key element to increasing productivity. (22-43) The DCO who can integrate the three recommendations will earn all the respect and power he could want and the majors will follow. The DCO position is a very powerful and challenging job, all that is needed are dynamic leaders to take on the responsibility.

APPENDIX

Excerpt from SACR 55-63

DEPUTY COMMANDER FOR OPERATIONS-FUNCTIONS

The deputy commander for operations:

1. Directs standardization/evaluation activities.
2. Directs intelligence activities.
3. Directs communications functions to insure that adequate instructions are disseminated to all combat crews.
4. Directs aircrews EWO and operations training activities to insure the adequacy of the wing training program to meet the Emergency War Order (EWO) commitment.
5. Directs the activities of the Command Control Division.
6. Coordinates with the deputy commander for maintenance on operations and training requirements.
7. Directs the activities of the unit Operations Plans Division.
8. Is responsible for the quality, content and timely completion of all combat mission folders and materials.
9. Is responsible for Combat Mission Folder (CMF) validation/certification process.
10. Directs the activities of the Alert Facility Management Division and all alert force operations.
11. On SAC bases, chairs the Air Traffic Control Board.
12. Directs training activities for combat crew training schools when that mission is assigned.
13. Is responsible for unit life support functions.
14. Provides support for the disaster preparedness program.

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